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INTEGRATION OF THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER BATTLE GROUP INTO THE JOINT TASK FORCE

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A paper submitted to the faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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15. Abstract:

Since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Navy has embraced the concept of joint operations. Furthermore, the forward-deployed presence of the aircraft carrier battle group (CVBG) remains the most visible and potent of naval forces available to the joint force commander. One would expect today's Navy and joint force commanders have perfected the integration of the CVBG into current operations throughout the world. However, analysis of recent deployments by CVBGs to the Persian Gulf shows the difficulty involved with such integration.

CVBGs, particularly the aircraft carrier and its air wing, exhibit significant differences that are not understood by the joint staffs leading to complications with melding into operations. Some of these differences are hardware related and unavoidable. Others are learned during training or are part of Navy culture and can be minimized. Specific examples from the NIMITZ and GEORGE WASHINGTON (GW) Battle Group 1997-98 deployments and the JOHN C. STENNIS and EISENHOWER (IKE) Battle Group 1998-99 deployments illustrate the differences.

The role of leadership is paramount. Each combatant commander's naval component commander should establish detailed written standing orders for the integration of CVBGs into their theater's operations. Additionally, the effort to understand JTF-SWA and other existing joint operations that will or could possibly employ a CVBG's assets should start at least midway through the CVBG's training cycle. A team of officers assigned to each CVBG, whose only function is to study, visit, and become fully acquainted with all aspects of the JTF's mission, methods, policies and procedures during the training cycle will be helpful.

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Abstract of

The Integration of the Carrier Battle Group into the Joint Task Force

Since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Navy has embraced the concept of joint operations. Furthermore, the forward-deployed presence of the aircraft carrier battle group (CVBG) remains the most visible and potent of naval forces available to the joint force commander. One would expect today's Navy and joint force commanders have perfected the integration of the CVBG into current operations throughout the world. However, analysis of recent deployments by CVBGs to the Persian Gulf shows the difficulty involved with such integration.

CVBGs, particularly the aircraft carrier and its air wing, exhibit significant differences that are not understood by the joint staffs leading to complications with melding into operations. Some of these differences are hardware related and unavoidable. Others are learned during training or are part of Navy culture and can be minimized. Specific examples from the NIMITZ and GEORGE WASHINGTON (GW) Battle Group 1997-98 deployments and the JOHN C. STENNIS and EISENHOWER (IKE) Battle Group 1998-99 deployments illustrate the differences.

The role of leadership is paramount. Each combatant commander's naval component commander should establish detailed written standing orders for the integration of CVBGs into their theater's operations. Additionally, the effort to understand JTF-SWA and other existing joint operations that will or could possibly employ a CVBG's assets should start at least midway through the CVBG's training cycle. A team of officers assigned to each CVBG, whose only function is to study, visit, and become fully acquainted with all aspects of the JTF's mission, methods, policies and procedures during the training cycle will be helpful.

"The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a team. This does not mean that all forces be equally represented in each operation. Joint force commanders choose the capabilities they need from air, land, sea, space, and special operations forces at their disposal. The resulting team provides joint force commanders the ability to apply overwhelming force from different dimensions and directions to shock, disrupt, and defeat opponents. Effectively integrated joint forces expose no weak points or seams to enemy action, while they rapidly and efficiently find and attack enemy weak points. Joint warfare is essential to victory."[1]

Joint Pub 1, Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Introduction

The above reflects the feelings of our national and military leadership concerning joint operations. Since the enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 and the end of the Cold War, the United States Navy has embraced the concept of joint operations as stated in current naval doctrine publications and the Navy's white papers, "...From the Sea", "Forward...from the Sea", and "Forward...from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept." Furthermore, the forward-deployed presence of the Aircraft Carrier Battle Group (CVBG) remains the most visible and potent naval forces available to joint force commanders (JFC) as a means of implementing all three components of the National Military Strategy: peacetime engagement, deterrence and conflict prevention and "fight and win." Successful integration of the aircraft carrier, as the centerpiece of the CVBG, into joint operations is paramount for the JFC and his staff. Due to the complexity of issues surrounding the CVBG, such integration, although not easy, remains essential.

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[1] Joint Publication 1: Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States. (Washington, D.C.: Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 1995), i.

This paper seeks to critically analyze the status of integrating the CVBG, and particularly the aircraft carrier and its air wing, into joint operations by examining recent deployments to the Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA) area of responsibility (AOR). Specifically, the NIMITZ and GEORGE WASHINGTON (GW) Battle Group 1997-98 deployments and the JOHN C. STENNIS and EISENHOWER (IKE) Battle Group 1998-99 deployments will be examined. Despite the fact JTF-SWA has existed since 1992 and has been supported by over 25 CVBG deployments, the transition occurring as a new CVBG arrives in the gulf requires some unexpected and significant adjustments from all involved. The predominately USAF JTF-SWA staff prefers to view the aircraft carrier and its air wing as "plug 'n play" items for daily Operation SOUTHERN WATCH (OSW) sorties and contingency operations such as Operations DESERT STRIKE and DESERT FOX. Such a view has not always been possible.

Why do carriers and their air wings appear so different to the JTF planners? Are the differences between CVBGs real and unavoidable, or does Navy culture and doctrine contribute to the confusion? Are the services doing everything possible to make the integration into the JTF efficient and seamless? Does the CVBG training cycle optimally support operating with existing JTFs? Throughout the discussions and in answering these questions the relationship of Navy culture, doctrine, and leadership in carrier operations will be addressed. The training cycle and long range planning will also be examined. Finally, the importance of fully understanding CVBG capabilities during CVBG turnover and the advantages a group of CVBG officers exclusively dedicated to real world operations throughout the training cycle and deployment will be discussed. Before continuing, it will be helpful to review a brief summary of the history, mission and command structure of JTF-SWA.

Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia (JTF-SWA)

"JTF-SWA was activated on August 26, 1992, as the command and control unit for United Nations coalition forces deployed to in the Persian Gulf region."[2] Not all services are required to participate in every joint operation.[3] As for JTF-SWA, the coalition forces consist mostly of air assets from the USAF, USN, the United Kingdom, France, and Saudi Arabia. More than 200 coalition aircraft are assigned to the JTF.[4] The primary mission of JTF-SWA is to uphold United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) 687, 688 and 949. These resolutions involve UN inspections for weapons of mass destruction, the "no-fly zone" south of 33 degrees north in Iraq, and the "no-drive zone" south of 32 degrees North ensuring no enhancement of Iraqi military capabilities in southern Iraq. The enforcement of the no-fly zone is known as Operation SOUTHERN WATCH (OSW).

Figure 1 (appendix A) shows JTF-SWA's part in the Southwest Asia AOR's command structure. CJTF-SWA reports to the U.S. Central Command and interfaces with the Central Command's respective service component commanders as appropriate to complete his missions. CVBG forces entering the AOR fall under the operational control (OPCON) of the naval component commander, U.S. Naval Forces, Central Command/Commander 5th Fleet. CVBG air assets are provided to JTF-SWA as tasked by the daily air tasking order (ATO). These aircraft remain under the Navy's operational control, but are under CJTF-SWA's tactical control (TACON) while operating in southern Iraq.

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[2] "Mission and History." JTF-SWA Homepage, http://www.jtfswa.aorcentaf.af.mil/mission.shtml (26 April 1999), 1.
[3] Joint Publication 1, i.
[4] "Fact Sheet." JTF-SWA Public Affairs Homepage, http://www.jtfswa.aorcentaf.af.mil/directorates/pa/jtfswa-facts.html (26 April 1999), 2.

As for the JTF-SWA staff, it is mostly made up of temporarily assigned members of the U.S. Air Force, augmented by the Navy and service members from the coalition countries.[5] Despite the experience gained by exposure to naval officers at the various service schools and joint assignments, USAF officers are deficient in basic carrier operations knowledge. The naval officers assigned are relied upon heavily for their insight. In the past, the USAF assigned members for a 60 to 90 day temporary assignment. Members mostly came from the staff of the general officer assigned. For example, the initial stand-up staff consisted of most of the 9th Air Force staff from Shaw AFB and was relieved by the 12th Air Force and members of his staff. Currently, the USAF has improved personnel planning and staff continuity by assigning the JTF Commander and several other senior officers, mostly directorate heads, for one year unaccompanied short tours.[6]

The naval officers are also temporary. Most are assigned from parent commands in the United States, but a few come from the carrier(s) operating in the gulf. The senior naval officer in JTF-SWA is the Deputy Commander. He is a flag officer, generally a junior O-7, and serves for periods of 90 to 120 days. The other officers are of various ranks, backgrounds and experience levels. Since these officers are the ones interfacing at various levels with other JTF directorates and other area naval component commands, their backgrounds and experience are crucial considering the potential differences inherent in the culture of tactical naval aviation.

The cultural or doctrinal differences are important since they influence the staff naval officers' backgrounds and impact whether or not the staff can consider aircraft carriers as interchangeable "plug'n play" items in the JTF's naval toolbox. These differences stem from

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[5] JTF-SWA Homepage, 2.

[6] Telephone conversation with Commander John Dal Santo, USN, Joint Task Force-Southwest Asia, Eskan Village, Saudi Arabia, 26 April 1999.

whether the carrier is an Atlantic or Pacific Fleet asset, experience gained and training received during the inter-deployment training cycle (IDTC), and the personalities of the ship's Commanding Officer, the Air Wing Commander, or CAG, and the Battle Group Commander.

The Navy Culture and Mindset

The Navy's long standing tradition of Admirals and Captains being the ultimate authority rests in over 200 years of open ocean operations where the fleet or battle group many times was the "lone wolf". The Navy's "lone wolf" image of the past was primarily due to the cold war induced lack of opportunities to render or receive help from the other services in the open ocean environment, particularly when the other services were to be tied up with a simultaneous land war.[7] In addition, naval officers tend to view doctrine and many procedural manuals or instructions as advisory. The leadership philosophy of "tell me what needs to be done, then leave me alone to do it" permeates the naval ranks. As stated by RADM John B. Nathman, the NIMITZ Battle Group commander, "...the minimum amount of command and control should be used to execute any given mission."[8]

When these facts, the "lone wolf" being left to show the initiative required to accomplish a given mission, combine with success, a confidence and "air" develops that is characteristic of naval leaders. This confidence manifests itself as a warrior's spirit. Naval leaders feel, and lead their subordinates to feel, their ship or command is the absolute best. Their CVBG is better than the previous. Successful naval officers have gotten their subordinates to figure out how to get

[7] Joseph C. Strasser, Rear Admiral. "The Role of Naval Forces in Combat." Naval Forward Presence and The National Military Strategy. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993), 254.
[8] Telephone conversation with Rear Admiral John B. Nathman, USN, Director, Air Warfare (N88), Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Washington, D.C., 28 April 1999.

the job done as a team and do so successfully or they would not continue to command. They have done it "their way" and won.

The new direction spelled out in the "...from the Sea" series of white papers breaks with tradition by putting increased importance on joint operations and littoral warfare. Essentially nothing should change for successful naval leaders. Their "team" has simply expanded to include members and commands from other services, eliminating the "lone wolf." However, some naval leaders adapt better than others do. Personality plays an essential role in the integration of a CVBG's forces into a JTF. The Battle Group Commander influences the ease of his forces' integration into the JTF's operations more so than any other individual.[9] Major General Kurt B. Anderson's experiences as CJTF-SWA from April 1996 to April 1997 back up this observation. He saw one CVBG commander who viewed his battle group's primary mission as supporting the JTF, while another commander asked to be tasked as little as possible so he could use his limited funding for other purposes.[10] Needless to say, the experiences in dealing with these two CVBGs caused much "eye rolling" and "eyebrow raising" by the JTF staff.

Cultural Differences Between CVBGs and the IDTC

Many of the differences between CVBGs are learned and can be avoided or at least minimized. These differences are created as a part of the Navy's culture and training. The CVBG forms its operational capabilities, character, personality, and doctrine during the IDTC. Throughout the IDTC, each command is given great freedom by the overseeing trainers to

[9] Telephone conversation with Major General Kurt B. Anderson, USAF, Commander 19th Air Force, Air Education and Training Command, Randolph Air Force Base, Texas, 28 April 1999.
[10] Ibid.

develop and refine required capabilities. Such freedom follows the theory of minimum control, but comes at a cost. Minimum control results in minimal standardization. As a result, the Navy fails to completely institutionalize many core competencies. Each CVBG re-learns the lessons of their predecessors reducing training efficiency. The CVBG emerging from the IDTC is the CVBG integrated into standing JTFs such as JTF-SWA.

The CNO directed the Navy to examine the manner in which it organizes and prepares forces to carry out missions and trains its people.[11] Despite attempting to support the CNO's guidance for the 21st century, the current training cycle for CVBGs continues to support remnants of the "lone wolf" warrior spirit. While moving from the open ocean scenarios of the late 1970s and the 1980s, the current scenario has changed little since the publication of "...from the Sea" following the Gulf War. During the IDTC, joint warfare concentrates upon naval warfare as defined by the CNO and CMC in "Forward...from the sea: The Navy Operational Concept" and the Marine Corps concept Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS).

Throughout the training cycle, each command learns to operate first as a unit, then as a battle group team, culminating in operations with an amphibious ready group in a fictitious littoral scenario (JTFEX). These scenarios vary from east to west coasts and are modified occasionally to support higher tasking. NIMITZ' final phase of training was modified to support SURGEX, an exercise designed to demonstrate and stress the carrier's ability to generate a higher than normal amount of sustained sorties over a several day period. Little, if any, emphasis is put into no-fly zone enforcement or CVBG integration into a predominantly USAF run air campaign or operation; two functions every CVBG will or could possibly see in the gulf.

[11] Forward ... from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept. (Washington, D.C.: Chief of Naval Operations, March 1997), 9.

Additionally, the relatively recent implementation of the Strike Fighter Weapons Training Instructor (SFWTI) program and standardizing influence of the restructured Naval Strike Weapons Center in Fallon, Nevada have done much raise the bar for naval strike warfare but still, air wings develop preferences and uniqueness during their training cycle. While the IDTC does many things well, it has some weaknesses that will be discussed and should be improved. Two specific areas of weakness are the resulting unique product, or individuality of the CVBG, produced as an output of the cycle and the lack of attention paid to real world operations, such as JTF-SWA, during the training cycle.

An Aircraft Carrier is an Aircraft Carrier, is an Aircraft Carrier...?

The resulting individuality produced as an output of the training is confusing to our sister services, particularly the USAF. Generally, they are the service acting as the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) that employs or exercises TACON of carrier-based aircraft once a CVBG arrives in their AOR. JTF-SWA's experience with NIMITZ and GEORGE WASHINGTON illustrates some of the differences and confusion possible from two seemingly identical NIMITZ class nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (CVN).

The two CVNs were from different coasts. Interestingly, a young GW pilot attempting to fly a routine training mission from NIMITZ would have been immediately confused as he tried to communicate with the various controllers on the ship and in the battle group. Atlantic and Pacific fleet UHF radio channelization plans are unexplainably different and have been for over 30 years.

Each CVN's training cycle differed. NIMITZ' IDTC was adjusted, as previously mentioned, by SURGEX. The ships' parked or spotted aircraft on their flight decks differently; a practice learned during their IDTCs. Both carriers brought similar air wings and capabilities to theater. Each had 36 F/A-18 Hornet strike fighters and 14 F-14 Tomcat fighters with the LANTIRN precision guided munitions (PGM) capability, although the GW's Tomcat's were newer upgraded models with a few other improved capabilities.

However, NIMITZ' flight operation cycle times were shorter than those on GW were. A cycle time is the scheduled time between successive aircraft launches from the flight deck and is roughly the time an aircraft has from take-off until it must return overhead the carrier to land. The ability to conduct safe and proficient cyclic flight operations is one core competency carriers and air wings must successfully demonstrate to the certifying "trainers" during the IDTC. The "trainers" allow each CVBG flexibility in choosing the cycle times it can operate with comfortably. NIMITZ routinely operated with one hour and 15 minute (1+15) cycles, while GW used one hour and 30 minute (1+30) cycles. A 15 minute difference may seem insignificant, but since most OSW missions require the carrier-based aircraft to double cycle, the difference allowed GW to provide 30 minutes more time in the southern Iraq no-fly zone "box" per sortie.[12]

While both CVBGs were dedicated to supporting JTF-SWA, the way they went about it was quite different. NIMITZ had been ordered to the gulf from Hong Kong on 2 October 1997, bypassing a port visit to Singapore, as the result of Iranian air attacks into the U.S. enforced no-fly zone in southern Iraq.[13] Initially, most of the flying consisted of OSW presence type missions. After about a month, the Iraqi government became more defiant of UN inspectors and

[12] Telephone conversation with Lieutenant Commander John M. Owens, USN, Joint Task Force - Computer Network Defense, Arlington, Virginia, 14 April 1999.
[13] Dana Priest, "U.S. Dispatches Carrier Group to Persian Gulf; Nimitz Set to Arrive as Warning to Iran, Iraq," The Washington Post, 4 October 1997, A8.

tensions increased. NIMITZ spent 53 days at sea until GW arrived allowing a port visit to Jebel Ali, UAE. GW was early into her deployment and came into a politically tense theater. Her CAG had given strict guidance to the carrier's representative on the JTF to maximize the number of sorties in support of JTF-SWA. The preference on NIMITZ by this time had shifted to minimum OSW support with increased demand placed upon the JTF schedulers to coordinate air combat training with Saudi F-15s and obtain bombing range times in Saudi and Kuwait.[14] The difference confused the USAF officers in the JTF-SWA Guidance, Apportionment and Targeting (GAT) cell responsible for scheduling day to day sorties into the "box".[15]

NIMITZ also preferred to provide JTF-SWA with at least one single cycle mission per day, GW never did. The short single cycle flights limited the target sets that could be reconnoitered and severely limited the ability of the aircraft to enforce no-fly zone violations. This preference combined with the difference in cycle times impacted USAF tanker planning, scheduling and apportionment. Also, during dual CVBG participation in OSW, deconfliction routes and altitudes for aircraft transiting to and from the "box" were complicated.[16] From a JTF perspective, single cycle flights appear counter-productive and should be avoided.

During planning for contingency operations in southern Iraq, other differences surfaced. NIMITZ preferred to use cluster bombs against certain targets, while GW preferred to use general purpose bombs against the same targets.[17] The Navy does not have full-time dedicated targeteers as does the USAF and as culture would have it, is much less rigid in dictating weapon choice. Each air wing uses its aircrew to form planning teams and act as targeteers for mission planning. This cadre of targeteers and planners develop their expertise and preferences during

[14] Owens.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.

the IDTC. Each is different and driven by the desires of the CVBG commander, CAG, and planning team leader. The STENNIS CVBG relieved the GW CVBG and also had some differences with GW in matching preferred weapons to certain targets.[18]

The Navy will benefit from standardizing the targeteering process. Joint Vision 2010 provides a template for combat in the 21st century and envisions leveraging information superiority to gain advantage.[19] The Navy should be able to use current and future communication capabilities, such as SIPRNET, to meet Joint Vision 2010's direction. Standardized weaponeering of selected targets should be easily obtained from supporting commands on either coast or Fallon, Nevada and provided to the CVBG or JTF. The JTF and naval component commander, 5th Fleet for JTF-SWA, should also actively seek this help. Once targets are weaponeered, significant justification should be required from relieving CVBGs to effect changes to standing plans. The idea is to set a standard and then stick to it.

Mission fuel planning and requirements also differed between the CVBGs. GW was much more conservative than NIMITZ.[20] On the same single CVBG contingency plan, NIMITZ initially asked for no USAF tanker support, while GW required four USAF tankers. The JTF-SWA GAT cell leader was very confused as to why when two carriers were tasked to strike the same targets using the same numbers and type of aircraft, one required no USAF fuel and the other required 240,000 pounds of USAF tanker fuel.[21] Eventually, a compromise was reached. Most of the differences were driven by the preferences of the two CAGs and their JTF representatives. Again, these preferences were based upon experience, some of which was

[18] Telephone conversation with Rear Admiral Ralph E. Suggs, USN, Deputy Commander in Chief, Chief of Staff, U.S. Special Operations Command, Tampa, Florida, 28 April 1999.
[19] Forward ... from the Sea: The Navy Operational Concept., 9.
[20] Owens.
[21] Ibid.

gained during the IDTC. Such differences are possible when one CVBG relieves another. While many air wings are comfortable executing another's plan, the possibility exists that a relieving CVBG will change not only tanking assets, but weapons to be delivered as well.

The solution to most of these preferential differences between CVBGs, whether they are learned during the training cycle, or simply result from the desires of the CAG or strike team leader, is a matter of standardization and leadership. Standardization of learned differences should be provided by the supporting commands during the IDTC; the weapons schools, the Naval Strike and Air Warfare Center, Carrier Groups ONE and FOUR, 2nd and 3rd Fleet Staffs, then made to stand by strong and effective leadership. Once these differences are minimized, the 5th Fleet Commander and staff must step in and fully standardize the CVBG interface with JTF-SWA. The CJTF and 5th Fleet could also have reduced the differences discussed thus far by providing strong direction to the CVBGs as to priorities.

The leadership side of the solution is easy if the leaders address the details with the CVBG. There is not a shortage of talented and capable leaders in charge of our CVBGs, CVNs, and air wings. However, convincing the carrier aviation culture to give up a little of its autonomy and conform to dictates will be hard. The warrior ethos and desire to do it their way present in all carrier aviators will resist such change. The lack of standardization between the coasts, and to some degree between battle groups on a particular coast, continues to perpetuate the "lone wolf", naval forces only, mindset that limits the ability of the carrier and air wing to maximize their potential contributions to joint operations.

Unavoidable Differences Between CVBGs

Each aircraft carrier and embarked air wing is different. Some of the differences are unavoidable, but planners in the CVBG and JTF must account for all. Differences are due to ship class, weapons and sensor loadouts, number, type and model of aircraft in the air wing. These differences are the most obvious and should be the easiest to account for during CVBG integration. The differences due to ship class are minimal since the older MIDWAY, CORAL SEA, and FORRESTAL class carriers have been decommissioned. However, the NIMITZ class nuclear-powered aircraft carriers (CVN) and the ENTERPRISE offer some operational advantages over the fossil-fueled aircraft carriers (CV) KITTY HAWK, CONSTELLATION, and JOHN F. KENNEDY. The CVNs' flight operations are less constrained by calm or low natural winds. Their speeds and jet fuel capacity allow much quicker transits from one area to another and if required, allow flight operations to be conducted for significantly longer periods of time before refueling.

The air wing differences are critical and are not going to go away even though the Navy has settled into the 50 (soon to be 46) precision guided munitions (PGM) capable strike fighter air wing concept. While all Tomcats are now LANTIRN capable, not all air wings have the same mix of aircraft. Most air wings are made up of one 14 (soon to be 10) aircraft F-14 Tomcat squadron and three 12 aircraft each F/A-18 Hornet squadrons. There are two air wings, CVW-7 and CVW-8, with two 10 aircraft Tomcat squadrons and two 12 aircraft Hornet squadrons. The differences between these two types of air wings has the potential to significantly impact JTF operations and particularly standing contingency plans. The types and numbers of weapons deliverable change, as do the number of platforms capable of launching HARM missiles in the

suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) role. In the future, as the F/A-18E/F arrives in the fleet, air wing capabilities will improve but potential differences will continue to influence JTFs.

The reduction in forces since the Gulf War has forced the Navy to gap the previously constant carrier presence around the globe. No longer can JTF-SWA be guaranteed a face to face turnover between CVBGs. However, face to face turnovers between CVBGs are important since they allow Navy folks to talk to other Navy folks in terms they are sure to understand. The best chance of accounting for differences comes with such a turnover. Allowing embarked flag staffs and air wing staffs to sit down one on one and go over all details of the AOR's operations and plans should be a goal of any commander, even if the face to face is conducted via video-teleconference. Such turnovers should be mandated even at the cost of exceeding the departing CVBG's perstempo by a few days. Application of modern communication capabilities and network centric improvements have great promise for the JFC in this area. Without the face to face turnover, the JFC must rely more than ever upon his staff and the newly arriving carrier and air wing to address and account for differences with the last CVBG. This process is not smooth or fool proof despite the best efforts of all involved. The JOHN C. STENNIS and EISENHOWER (IKE) Battle Group 1998-99 deployments illustrate the increased effort required and potential confusion present without a Navy to Navy turnover.

The maiden deployment of JOHN C. STENNIS took her to the gulf as part of an around the world transit from Norfolk, Virginia to San Diego, California. CVW-8, with two Tomcat and two Hornet squadrons, was embarked in STENNIS. IKE, with one Tomcat and three Hornet squadrons, was scheduled for and conducting her six month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea. JOHN C. STENNIS left the gulf as scheduled for Australia enroute to San Diego in July 1998. It was during the scheduled gapping of CVBG coverage in the gulf that another crisis with

Iraq developed that caused the President to order IKE from the Adriatic Sea to Persian Gulf. JTF-SWA sent a group of briefers to meet IKE in the Red Sea. At the same time, IKE sent in a group of officers to meet with the JTF staff in Saudi Arabia.[22] The briefings covered numerous details of OSW and rules of engagement, however lacked appropriate attention to the existing contingency plans. Part of the reason may be the tendency of the JTF, and staffs in general, to hold highly classified plans too close and limit knowledge from even those who have a critical need to know. The incompatibility of IKE's air wing with the STENNIS plan was not clearly identified until IKE was transiting the Strait of Hormuz.[23] While the air wing was flying OSW sorties upon arrival in the northwestern Persian Gulf, it took approximately a week to get the IKE's air wing fully integrated into the contingency plans that about a year later evolved into the strikes of Operation DESERT FOX.[24] The success demonstrated during DESERT FOX would not have been as easily obtained had the strikes been ordered upon IKE's arrival in the gulf.

The failed air strike into Lebanon on 4 December 1983 that resulted in two Navy jets being downed, required the Reverend Jesse Jackson to rescue Lieutenant Robert Goodman and left Lieutenant Mark Lang dead, did not involve a JTF. Regardless, a JTF can still learn much from the chaos on the carriers that doomed the mission and avoid creating such chaos today. It was a combination of inadequate command and control structure, poor decision-making, failure to adhere to procedures and poor communication that led to the chaos. Aircraft were not ready, aircrews were not briefed, and the proper ordnance was not loaded. Even though the services have come far since the days of Lebanon, chaos could have existed in the gulf had IKE been called to launch her aircraft into Iraq as she arrived on station in 1998. The right people on the

[22] Interview with Lieutenant Commander Dan Sad, USN, Naval War College, Newport, RI, 6 April 1999.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.

carrier must know about plans and be ready upon arrival. Aircrew must study the threats, the target areas and prepare themselves to acquire the targets visually or with their sensors. They must rehearse, if only in their minds or on desktop simulators, their missions. Aircrews are not the only ones on the carrier susceptible to chaos. The planned number and type of aircraft must be located properly or spotted on the flight deck. The correct bombs and missiles must be broken out of magazines, and built up; built up means the desired fuses, fins, or guidance units must be attached. This could take from half a day to a couple of days depending upon the type and location of the components in the magazines. Even after the weapons are readied, they still have to make it to the flight deck and get loaded on the aircraft. The carrier, like any other military organization is a team and it is through preparation and teamwork that they succeed. It is proper forethought and coordination by the JTF and afloat staffs that will allow their teammates on the carrier the best chance of successfully carrying out any mission.

The Solution

Currently, we are getting by on the talents of our people. Our people are good and that is why we have been successful thus far. However, it is only a matter of time before Murphy's Law catches up to us. OSW will soon be seven years old. Everyone is comfortable with what is going on, nearly complacent. We must guard against complacency and give our good people a better chance for success. Rear Admiral Ralph E. Suggs attributed all of the STENNIS CVBG's success to having the right people in the right place at the right time.[25] His direction to his CAG was clear. All officers sent to JTF-SWA as the carrier's representative were to be the best they

[25] Suggs.

had to offer and capable of making decisions for CAG, the Captain or the Admiral.[26] While it sounds like common sense, not all CVBGs have followed this advice. Such common sense direction should show up as part of the 5th Fleet's standing orders for CVBGs as they arrive into the gulf. 5th Fleet should work with JTF-SWA and develop such a single source, clearly understandable written set of standing orders for arriving CVBGs. The orders would establish **in detail** exactly how turnovers are to be conducted, when they should start, who does them, where they are to be conducted and what must be discussed. The goal of the standing orders should be to put rigor and detail into what is now an ad hoc process.

Additionally, the effort to understand JTF-SWA and other existing joint operations or commands that will or could possibly employ CVBG assets during a deployment should start at least midway through the IDTC. A team of officers, whose only function is to study, visit, and become fully acquainted with all aspects of the JTF's mission, methods, policies and procedures should be established. This team could be assigned to the CVBG staff, the carrier, 5th Fleet, or each carrier type commander, COMNAVAIRLANT and COMNAVAIRPAC. If assigned to each CVBG staff, the team would replace any representatives required ashore, relieving the air wing of the burden to re-qualify aircrew after an extended stay ashore.

The de facto practice used by JTF-SWA of sending their team of officers, generally the senior naval officers and staff lawyers, out to the ship when practical is not always feasible. As long as the only operations JTF-SWA is concerned with are routine OSW missions, the current practice is possible. However, should tensions heat up or an active campaign commence requiring around the clock operations, the JTF commander will not be able to spare his people.[27] It is for this reason the burden should be upon the Navy to establish early contact and "get inside

[26] Ibid.
[27] Anderson.

the heads" of those on JTF-SWA's staff. Through this approach, the CVBG will be ready when a crisis requires an unscheduled visit to the gulf or other hot spot.

Finally, the role of leadership can not be overstated. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has stated his vision for the future and the CNO has reinforced that vision. Teamwork dominates the vision. Every force or group commander and commanding officer supports the concept of teamwork. Yet when the rubber meets the road during real world operations, teamwork gets hard and results in falling a little short of the vision. Some of the differences between CVBGs discussed do not paint a picture of the fully synchronized joint team described by our senior leadership. There are several areas where more rigorous standardization of how our carriers and air wings operate will improve the ease of integration into joint operations. It is up to those who deploy and those who support the deployers to critically and honestly look at how to improve. Changes can be made to improve how deployments are conducted, but it requires strong leadership to see the changes occur. As situations throughout the world develop and require more and more U.S. military presence, our CVBGs will be challenged and continue to be stretched thin, yet their mobility will allow response. Ultimately the leaders and their leadership will determine if the CVBG is ready for the challenge and succeeds. The CVBG will be ready to "fight and win" if the leaders emphasize not only the core competencies required during the IDTC, but demand attention be paid to existing operations throughout the world that could possibly involve the battle group, whether scheduled or not.

JTF-SWA Command Structure

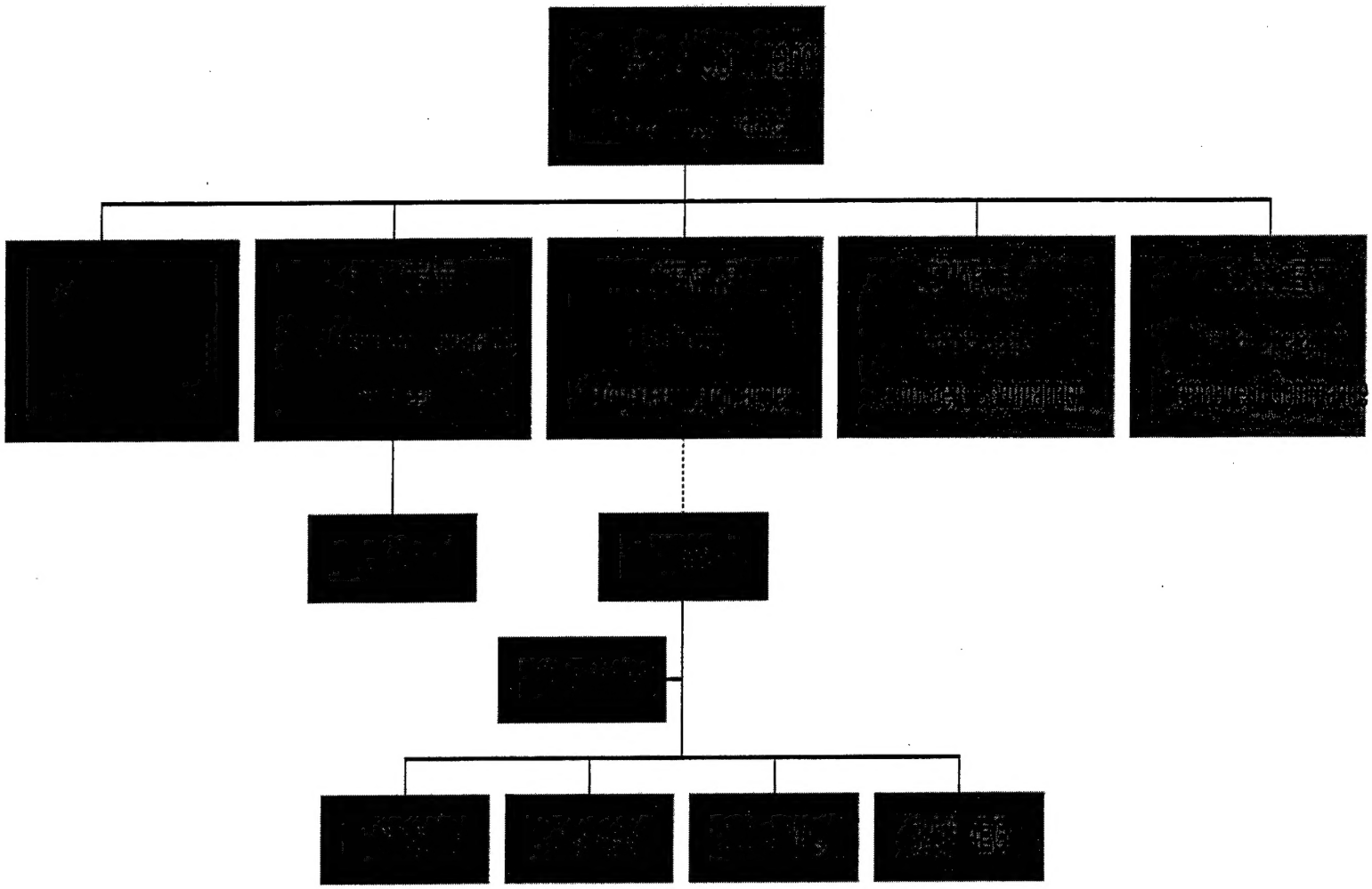

Figure 1: JTF-SWA Command Relationships

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